



# ***PROJECT REPORT***

## **Host Community Women's Livelihoods Project**

Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh





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# PROJECT OUTLINE:

## HOST COMMUNITY WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS

In May 2023, Maiya School expanded our programming into a livelihoods project for Bangladeshi women living in the community surrounding the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. We've partnered with two local women's associations to train their members in agricultural, food preparation, and sewing skills, along with providing them with resources, so they can grow their own food and generate income to support themselves and their families. The aim of the project is to empower local women by equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge that can enhance their self-reliance and contribute to their overall wellbeing.



# THE CONTEXT

## The Rohingya refugee crisis

The massive influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh has had a profound impact on the local community in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh received more refugees in just the first three weeks of the influx (in August 2017) than Europe received in 2016 during the Syrian crisis (Huang et al. 2018).

## Impact of the refugee influx on the Host Community

The Rohingya refugee crisis has profoundly affected the livelihoods of host communities, particularly those who live in Ukhiya upazila in Cox's Bazar, as it is compounded by the fact that this area of Bangladesh was already low in socio-economic development. 80% of Ukhiya locals surveyed said they had been directly affected by the influx.

The rising prices of essential goods and decreasing daily wages for labourers have severely affected host community populations, especially among poor households. There have also been extremely adverse impacts on physical infrastructure, public services, and the environment. Many locals are concerned about sharing scarce natural resources such as groundwater and forests with the refugee population, and many households have lost their crops as a result of the influx. Because of this, there are mounting tensions among refugees and host communities.



# THE CONTEXT

## Gendered impacts

Adding to this, the conditions for women's employment and empowerment in Cox's Bazar were substandard even before the crisis. Since local women have less exposure to job markets, it is important to build skills that can allow them to make an income.

## Proposed solution: Income-generating activities

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2018) has recommended that focusing on income-generating activities in the host community, especially in agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and vocational training, is essential to revitalise employment opportunities and consequently promote social cohesion among refugees and host communities.

The UNDP proposes homestead gardening in the host community as a strategy to help both refugee and host communities. Refugees are provided basic food rations but depend on local markets, such as in Ukhiya, for fresh produce. Supporting households in agricultural production through providing training and micro-gardening kits is effective in achieving food security and helping poor households diversify their livelihoods.

Huang, C., Ash, N., Skinner, M., & Gough, K. (2018). The Rohingya Crisis: Bangladesh Deserves a Win-Win Solidarity Compact. Policy Insights, July: 30–33.

UNDP (2018). Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities. <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/impacts-rohingya-refugee-influx-host-communities>.



## Maiya School

Maiya School was founded to provide girls affected by displacement around the world the opportunity to attain an education, improving their own life, and the lives of those around them.

Maiya School is the donor organisation for the Livelihoods Project and are responsible for supporting the implementing partners in project design, monitoring and evaluation.



## Prantic Unnayan Society

Prantic Unnayan Society are Maiya School's implementing partners on the ground in Bangladesh. We work closely with them to deliver quality education in the Rohingya refugee camps and livelihood projects in the host community.

Prantic's role was to implement the Livelihoods Project including procurement of resources, coordinating and conducting training sessions, and providing support to beneficiaries. Their team includes experts in organic agriculture and livelihoods.



## Hillful and Momota Women's Associations

Hillful and Momota Women's Associations were established three years ago in Rajapalong Union in Ukhiya Upazila in order to increase the self-reliance of local women. Members of the two associations participated in trainings under the Project to build their capacity to improve their livelihoods.



## Goal

To empower host community women by equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge that can enhance their self-reliance through income-generating activities, contributing to their overall wellbeing.

## Planning

In May 2023, Prantic met with 20 members of Hillful and Momota Women's Associations to discuss how to improve women's status in their local area, and shared their ideas to promote and protect women's rights through their cooperatives.

One of three identified objectives for their cooperatives was to "Enhance income, food security and nutrition in the local community by producing organic, healthy, and affordable vegetables."

## Activities

To meet this objective, Maiya School and Prantic developed the Livelihoods Project, focusing on skill development in the following three areas:

- Pickle making
- Homestead gardening
- Sewing and handicrafts

## Participants

40 women aged 18 to 58 from Ukhiya Upazila were involved in this project, receiving skills training and resources to improve their livelihoods.





# LIVELIHOODS PROJECT IMPACT



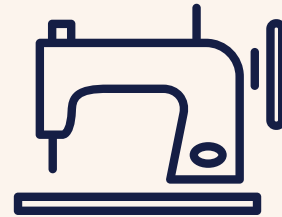
**20** women trained on homestead gardening



**10** women trained on fertiliser & compost skills



**40** women trained on pickling skills



**10** women trained on sewing skills



**5** women trained on traditional embroidery



**40** women given resources to kickstart their livelihoods

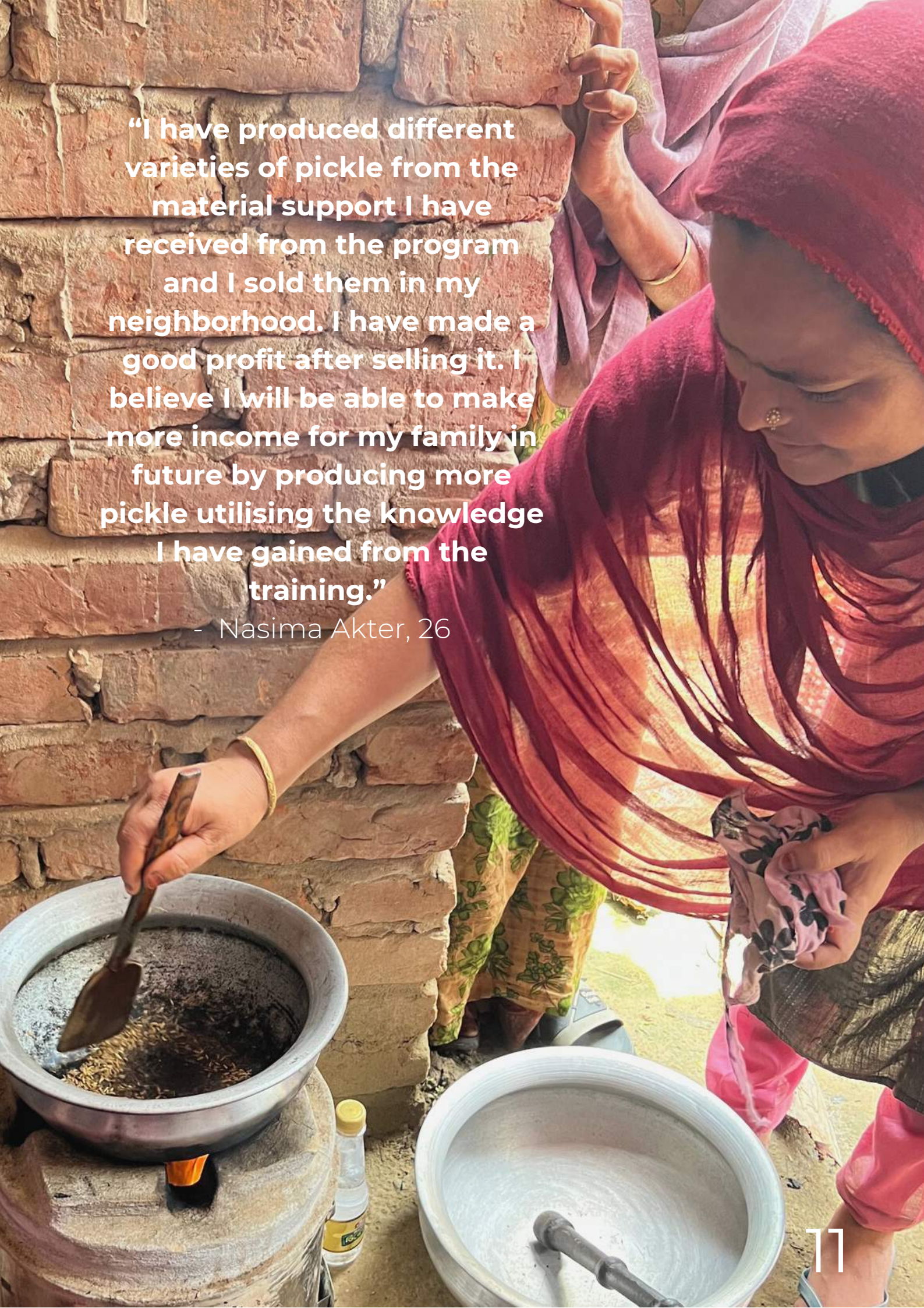
Based on pre- and post-intervention surveys and interviews with the participants, 100% of women that received training under the Host Community Women's Livelihoods Project believed that it will help them gain employment or further their livelihoods.



# PICKLE MAKING

<b>OBJECTIVE:</b>	Improve 40 Host Community (HC) women's capacity to generate an income by making pickled goods from local produce and selling them in the local marketplace.
<b>OUTPUTS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trained 40 women on how to make pickled goods from local produce, increasing theoretical knowledge of and practical pickling skills.</li><li>• Provided 40 women with pickling ingredients and material resources.</li><li>• Provided additional support and skills to 1 HC women to sell pickled goods in the local market.</li></ul>
<b>OUTCOMES:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This project helped further the livelihood of the one participant that received extra support in selling her pickles. She has had an initial income increase of 500BDT per month due to selling pickles she has made.</li><li>• 100% of participants said that this training will help them gain employment or further their livelihood, by selling pickles to the local marketplace.</li></ul>



A woman wearing a red sari and a red headscarf is cooking in a traditional brick kitchen. She is using a wooden spoon to stir a mixture in a large metal pot placed on a brick stove. Another person in a purple sari is partially visible behind her. The kitchen is built with rough-hewn bricks, and there is a white plastic bucket on the ground nearby.

**“I have produced different varieties of pickle from the material support I have received from the program and I sold them in my neighborhood. I have made a good profit after selling it. I believe I will be able to make more income for my family in future by producing more pickle utilising the knowledge I have gained from the training.”**

- Nasima Akter, 26



# PICKLE MAKING

## Training Outcomes

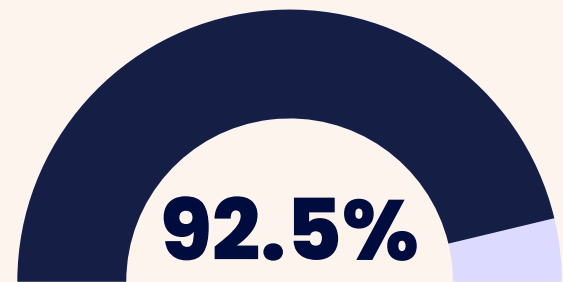
### Training expectations

100% of women participating in the pickling training sessions said the training met their expectations, that it was **interactive** and **engaging**, and that the instructor was **knowledgeable** about the topic.



### Skills taught

37 out of 40 (92.5%) of women **learnt all topics** in pickle making they wanted to. The remaining 3 participants said they were **taught most skills** they wanted to learn.



### What did the participants most like about the training?

“All parts of the training.”

“Practical pickle making demonstration.”

“Learning about the right methods for pickling.”



# HOMESTEAD GARDENING

<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>	<p>1. Improve 20 Host Community (HC) women's capacity to meet their families' nutritional needs by growing vegetables at their homes.</p> <p>2. Improve 20 Host Community (HC) women's capacity to generate an income by growing at their homes and selling vegetables in the local marketplace.</p>
<b>OUTPUTS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trained 20 HC women on local seasonal vegetables, increasing their agricultural knowledge and capacity to grow vegetables at their homes.</li><li>• Provided 20 HC women with resources necessary to initiate their homestead gardens (seeds, nets and fertiliser).</li><li>• Trained 10 HC women in how to make fertiliser and compost.</li><li>• Provided 10 HC women with resources needed to make fertiliser and compost at home.</li><li>• Provided 2 HC women with additional resources (bamboo) to support growing vegetables on their homestead.</li><li>• Provided 2 HC women with additional support and skills to sell homegrown produce in the local market.</li></ul>
<b>OUTCOMES:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This project helped further the livelihood of the two women that received extra support in homestead gardening. They have had initial income increases of 500BDT and 1000BDT per month due to selling vegetables they have grown on their homesteads in the local marketplace.</li></ul>



**“I have grown varieties of vegetables from seeds and fertiliser I received from the program. Moreover, the net received from the program has protected my vegetables from damage. I have served the vegetables to my family and sold the extra portion in the market.”**

- Hosneara Begum, 41





**“I have produced different kinds of vegetables from the seeds. After fulfilling my family nutrition, I have sold the extra vegetables in the market. I have earned a good amount of money from selling the extra vegetables.”**

**- Minuara Begum, 30**

# HOMESTEAD GARDENING

## Training Outcomes

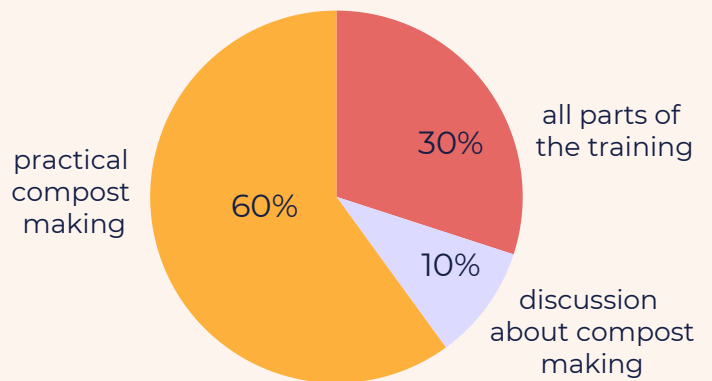
### Training expectations

100% of women participating in the compost-making training sessions said the training met their expectations, that it was **interactive** and **engaging**, and that the instructor was **knowledgeable** about the topic.



### Training content

When asked what their **favourite part of the training** was, 30% said they liked all parts of the training, 60% said they liked the practical compost making component, and 10% said they liked the discussion.



100% of participants believed that this training will help them gain employment or improve their livelihood.

“I will use quick compost for my garden to generate more profit from homestead gardening.”

“I will make vermi-compost commercially and sell them to others.”





# SEWING & HANDICRAFTS

<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>	<p>Improve 15 Host Community (HC) women's capacity to generate an income by selling sewing and embroidery services.</p>
<b>OUTPUTS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trained 10 HC women in sewing skills.</li><li>• Trained 5 HC women in handicraft embroidery skills.</li><li>• Provided 15 HC women with resources needed to make tote bags to sell to the international community.</li></ul>
<b>OUTCOMES:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This project helped further the livelihood of two women interviewed that took part in the sewing and handicraft program. They have had both initial income increases of 500BDT per month due to selling sewing services to her neighbours.</li></ul>





**“Now I am able to contribute more in my family income. I will utilise the experience I have gained from the program for earning more income.”**

**- Farida Yasmin, 39**

# SEWING & HANDICRAFTS

**“I have earned a decent income by producing bags through this program. The knowledge I have gained by working in this program will help me to produce customise bag using local design.”**

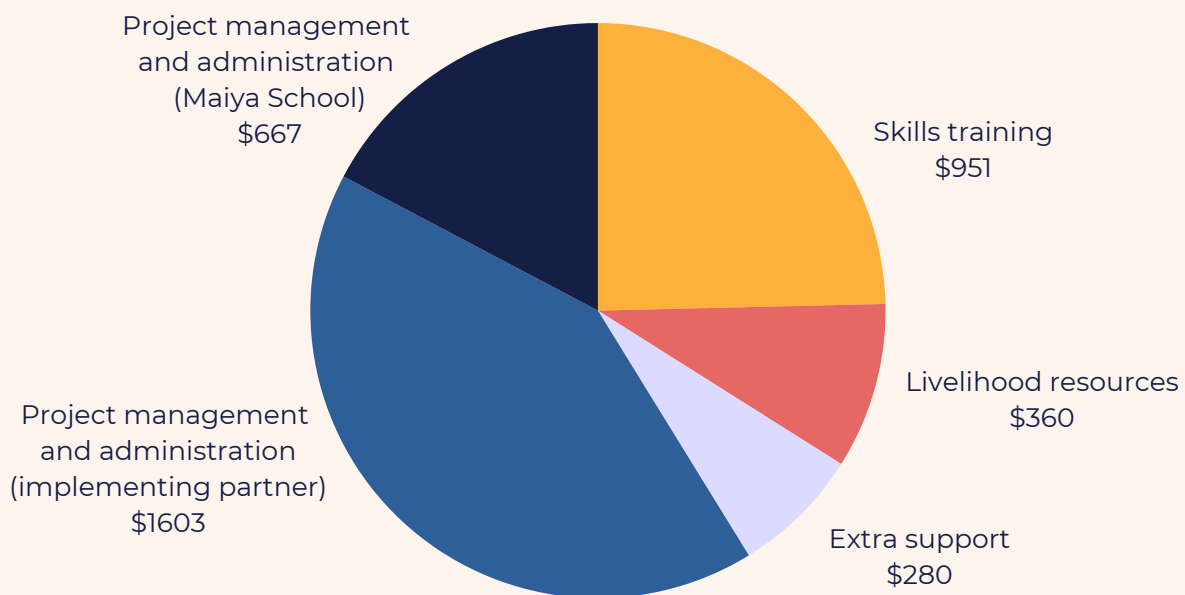
- Sabeha Begum, 39



# FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

A total of AU\$3860 was spent on the *Host Community Women's Livelihoods Project*. Averaged over the 40 participants, the cost was AU\$96.50 per woman. Per set of livelihood skills learnt (40 participants for pickling, 20 for gardening, 10 for fertiliser, and 15 for sewing training), the average cost was AU\$45.40.

With an average initial increase of 600BDT (AU\$9) for monthly income per participant, the skills development activities are a great investment in the livelihoods of Host Community women, with participants recuperating the total invested costs through the selling of services in just five months. Plus, participants' monthly earnings will likely increase through the strengthening of market networks and enhancement of learnt skills over time.



25% of total spending was allocated to the skills training component, including trainer salary and materials, with a further 9% spent on the resources distributed to participants to support their livelihoods (e.g. nets, seeds, fertiliser, pickle ingredients and jars). 7% was spent on the extra support element, including coaching and resources. 42% was allocated to project management, staffing, and administrative costs of our implementing partner organisation.

17% of total costs were allocated to Maiya School's project management and administration fees. Maiya School aims to always spend less than 25% of total project funding on administration costs.



# RECOMMENDATION

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## Project Participants

All five women that received additional support were interviewed after the project, and said that they would like “more input support and training”. Based on this feedback, we recommend that the project continues in the future, to provide Host Community women additional skills training and resources to improve their livelihoods. For the sewing project, both women recommended focusing on local design.

## Prantic Unnayan Society

Prantic recommends continuing the project. Prantic proposes that the Ukhiya women craft handicrafts and grow produce that can be sold to the wider Ukhiya community. Prantic can assist with linking the participants to local Ukhiya supershops and marketplaces. In addition, Prantic would like to sell handicrafts in both the Cox’s Bazar tourist market and international market.

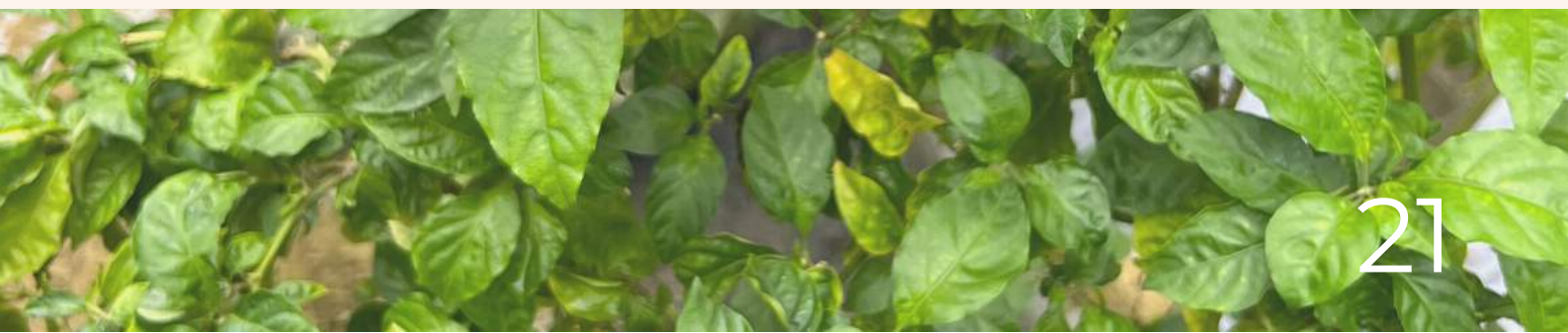
## Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

The RRA conducted in May 2023 recommended that a livelihoods project focus on three key objectives:

1. Members are better empowered with strengthened organization with strong leaderships.
2. Community people are active to protect and promote women rights, gender-based violence (GBV), early marriage, illegal marriage and verbal divorce.
3. Enhanced income, food security and nutrition in the local community by producing organic, healthy, and affordable vegetables.

The RRA recommended various activities to achieve these objectives, including:

- strengthening organisational capacity through regular meetings, leadership and accounts training;
- increasing GBV knowledge through training and community awareness;
- improving self-reliance through agricultural training and resource provision.



# RECOMMENDATION

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### Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

In their Homestead Gardening Guidelines for Cox's Bazar, FAO highlighted four objectives to strengthen resilience and access to nutritious diets for the Host Community:

1. Increase household access to high-quality, nutritious food and dietary diversity.
2. Enhance utilization of nutritious foods and support the health and well-being of beneficiaries.
3. Provide opportunities for capacity building.
4. Increase local vegetable production.



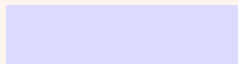
FAO, WFP, & FSS (2022). *Homestead gardening guidelines: Vegetable production for household consumption using minimal space in Rohingya camps and host communities. Cox's Bazar.*

### Maiya School

Taking into consideration the recommendations from all stakeholders, Maiya School recommends that the *Host Community Women's Livelihoods Project* be continued with the following objectives:

1. Increase household access to high-quality, nutritious food and dietary diversity in the Ukhiya host community, thereby increasing household resilience to meet their own nutritional needs.
2. Provide opportunities for capacity building – teach technical agricultural skills to boost production using minimal amounts of land, soil, water and other resources.
3. Provide income-generating opportunities for host community women through agricultural, food production, and handicraft training, and providing resources and market linkages.
4. Strengthen the financial and leadership capacity, and increase the sustainability of local women's cooperatives.

Maiya School aims to continue the project into 2024, building upon existing skills and knowledge to making lasting change with the Ukhiya host community.



Maiya School would like to thank our generous donors for their support. Thank you for believing in women's empowerment and making this project possible.

If you would like to learn more about Maiya School and our projects, please visit our website, connect with our socials or get in touch via the details below.



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